

Syrian gunboat attack on Cypriot ferry kills 1, injures 15

LARNACA (AP) — A Syrian gunboat opened fire on a passenger ferry travelling between this East Mediterranean island and the Lebanese port of Jounieh Saturday, killing one passenger, crew members said.

Fifteen passengers were wounded, four critically, they said.

The British Royal Air Force (RAF) evacuated 15 of the wounded by winching them aboard three helicopters several hours before the ship docked at Larnaca at 1 p.m. (1100 GMT).

The wounded, most suffering cuts and burns in the legs from shrapnel, were rushed to local hospitals for treatment.

The dead man was identified as Nasser Abu Nasr, 26, who was going to Lebanon to pick up his pregnant wife because he had just obtained an emigration visa to Canada.

"He was hit by shrapnel all over his body," said 22-year-old Rima Suleiman, a receptionist on the boat.

"He was sitting facing the bar exactly facing where a shell hit."

The shelling also started a fire on board which was extinguished, the crew said.

At least 20 holes were visible in the starboard (right) side of the ship when it docked, and shattered pipes throughout the ship leaked water.

One of the shells went through a window on the central deck housing the bar and the cafeteria,

causing most of the casualties as passengers sheltered there, said third officer Andreas Michaelis.

He said the ship was attacked three separate times within an hour, starting around 4 a.m. (0200 GMT) when it was 30 kilometres west of Jounieh.

Crew members said the sailors on board the 30-metre-long gunboat fired warning shots over the ferry and then hailed it in Syrian-accented Arabic.

The name Aoudah was visible on the side of the ship as it circled the ferry and it was flying a Syrian flag, they said.

"They asked us who was on board and where we were going," said Egyptian mechanic Mohammad Al Mursihi, 27. He said he talked with them over the radio because most of the crew spoke only Greek or English.

Michaelis said the Baroness M started to turn around after the warning shots, and the gunboat returned 10 minutes later and fired the first salvo at the ferry.

He said the fire appeared concentrated just below the bridge at the captain's quarters, which were wrecked.

The gunboat attacked a third time about 20 minutes later when

the Baroness M was headed back toward Larnaca, Michaelis said, sending shells into the passenger area.

Crew member Danny Zarour said the gunboat "peppered" the side of the ship with shells.

"When the Baroness M radioed for help for the wounded passengers, the Syrian boat hauled down its flag," Zarour said.

"Pandemonium reigned on board," added Michaelis.

"We ran from one side of the boat to the other as the gunboat circled," Suleiman said.

Nora Kasbar, spokeswoman for Socomar, agents for the ship, said it carried 64 passengers and 52 crew members. The boat had left Larnaca at 11 p.m. (2100 GMT) Friday for the seven-hour trip to Jounieh, 200 kilometres east.

The RAF answered the distress call, dropping two doctors and a medical team on board to sedate the wounded.

Flight Lt. Dick Bardon said the helicopters hovered above the ship for an hour while the operation was completed. One passenger was too seriously wounded to be lifted off the ship's deck, he said.

The RAF maintains a major base at Akrotiri on the southern coast of Cyprus.

One French passenger on the boat said he did not hear a thing, waking up only when the boat returned to Larnaca.

The boat, one of two that

travels to Lebanon from Cyprus, is a main escape route for Christians in embattled Lebanon, many currently fleeing from the army-militia confrontation that erupted at Jan. 30.

Army Commander Gen. Michel Aoun has been fighting for three weeks for control of the Christian enclave with the Lebanese Forces (LF) under Samir Geagea.

The port of Jounieh is controlled by the Lebanese Forces, which also has a share in the ferry operations. Four gunboats of the Lebanese Navy escaped from Jounieh port when Geagea's forces attacked the navy base at the start of the fighting on Jan. 30.

The four boats, which remained loyal to Aoun, were reportedly in the waters between Lebanon and Cyprus. The Lebanese coast is also patrolled regularly by the Syrian and Israeli navies.

The captain and crew of the ship had been reluctant to take it into Jounieh because of the risks involved in the ongoing fighting.

The ferry service and other maritime traffic came under fire repeatedly during six months of fighting in Lebanon in 1989 between Aoun and the Syrian army with their Lebanese militia allies.

The ferries were not hit, but at least eight ships were sunk or set on fire, including small boats taking passengers out to the ferry waiting off shore.

Syria optimistic over release of hostages

DAMASCUS (AP) — Information Minister Mohammad Salman said Saturday that statements from Iran and Lebanon have given Syria "great hope" that Western hostages in Lebanon will be released.

He told Peggy Say, sister of U.S. hostage Terry Anderson: "We're optimistic for the release at a time when we hear statements by the Iranians and an official in Lebanon."

But he cautioned Mrs. Say that a hostage release may not be imminent.

"The matter requires careful study and patience as well as coordination of efforts with international and local parties. We are following this road," he said.

Salman's optimism stemmed from a statement made Friday in Beirut by Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, the most influential Shi'ite Muslim cleric in Lebanon, who called for a new approach to free the hostages.

Fadlallah, who recently returned from a visit to Tehran where he met senior Iranian leaders, spoke the day after an editorial in the Tehran Times, which usually reflects the thinking of President Hashemi Rafsanjani, called for the hostages to be freed. It was the first time an Iranian newspaper has made such a statement.

"We have to think of finding realistic and humanitarian means to free the foreign hostages," Fadlallah said in a sermon.

The hostage issue "has been widely exploited by Western forces to harm the image of Muslims," Fadlallah said.

He is the spiritual guide to the Iranian-aligned Hezbollah, or Party of God, which is believed to be an umbrella for groups holding most of the 18 Westerners missing in Lebanon.

They are eight Americans, four Britons, two West Germans, two Swiss, an Irishman and an Italian.

The longest held is Anderson, 42, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press. He was kidnapped in mainly Muslim west Beirut on March 16, 1985.

Salman told Mrs. Say, in Damascus on her fifth mission to her brother and other hostages:

"We have great hope now that we can work with all concerned to secure the release of the hostages."

He said that earlier statements from Iran and Shi'ite leaders in Lebanon about a possible hostage release "were not made in such a serious manner."

Salman was the second Syrian minister to express optimism to Mrs. Say, who is on a tour meeting with world leaders including Pope John Paul II, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara told her Thursday that the Tehran Times editorial was "a good sign" and that he was going to visit Tehran soon and "work intensively with Iranian leaders" for the hostages' release.

Salman echoed Shara's belief that a hostage release will be difficult before the chaotic situation in Lebanon has been resolved.

He said the United States could play a more important role than any other country in bringing this about.

Syria, with 40,000 troops in Lebanon, is the main power broker in that country. The Syrians have been instrumental in securing the release of some Western hostages over the last five years and played a role in other releases. Syria is Iran's main ally in the region.

Salman said Syria "would be proud if we were able to release any hostage regardless of his nationality."

He said Syria is categorically opposed to kidnapping.

"Neither Terry Anderson nor any other hostage is responsible for the problems of the area. And kidnapping cannot solve these problems," Salman said.

Mrs. Say told him: "I know in my heart that Syria's conviction to gain the release of the hostages is total."

She said she hoped a hostage release would bring full reconciliation between Syria and the Middle East seeking word of her brother and other hostages:

MIDDLE EAST NEWS BRIEFS

Algerian, Saudi ministers hold talks

NICOSIA (R) — The foreign ministers of Algeria and Saudi Arabia, both members of the Arab League committee for Lebanon, discussed peace efforts for the war-torn country Saturday, the Saudi Press Agency reported. It said Algerian Saturday, the Saudi Press Agency reported. It said Algerian Foreign Minister Sid Ahmad Ghosali, in Saudi Arabia for a pilgrimage to Mecca, also discussed bilateral relations with his Saudi counterpart Prince Saad Al Faisal.

Syria, Pakistan discuss cooperation

DAMASCUS (R) — A Pakistani minister had talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara Saturday about Afghanistan and events in the subcontinent, the official Syrian News Agency (SANA) said. It said senior Pakistani Minister Without Portfolio Nusrat Bhutto also discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict and Lebanon. Officials said Syrian President Hafez Al Assad had accepted an invitation to visit Pakistan. No date was given.

Omani forces launch exercise

NICOSIA (R) — The Omani Armed Forces launched a series of manoeuvres Saturday to improve their combat skills, the Oman News Agency said. The agency, monitored in Cyprus, said ground, naval and air forces were taking part in the "Daring Adventure-2" war games expected to last several days.

50 injured in Algerian train crash

ALGIERS (R) — About 50 people suffered slight injuries Saturday when a passenger train slammed into a freight train in the Algiers suburb of Al Harrach, the Algerian News Agency (APS) said. APS said the passenger train, bound for the western city of Oran, caught up with the freight train travelling on the same line in the same direction and rammed it from behind. The accident was due to a signalling error, APS said.

GCC, EC ministers to meet in March

BAHRAIN (R) — Foreign ministers of the European Community (EC) and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are due to meet in Muscat on March 17, Irish Foreign Minister Gerry Collins said in Bahrain Saturday. The Gulf News Agency quoted Collins, whose country currently holds the presidency of the EC, as saying the Europeans had agreed to a proposal for the meeting put by Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Mubarak Al Khalifa. Collins, who arrived in Bahrain Friday night on the first leg of a Gulf tour, was speaking after meeting Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa Ibn Salman Al Khalifa. The agency said regional and international issues, recent democratic changes in Eastern Europe and cooperation between the EC and the GCC are being reviewed. Bahrain's Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa Ibn Sulman Al Khalifa and his foreign and interior ministers attended the meeting which followed economic talks in Granada recently between officials from the two groups. The GCC, an economic and political alliance, groups Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.

Turkey urges change in Cypriot attitude

ANKARA (R) — Turkey, throwing its weight behind Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash before U.N.-sponsored talks in New York, said Greek Cypriots must change their negative attitude if there was to be a solution to the Cyprus problem.

"There is an urgent need on the part of Greek Cypriots to make radical changes in their negative attitude towards Turkish Cypriots," a Foreign Ministry statement said. "It is obvious that in order to establish a political partnership on the island, the two communities will have to have peaceful relations, otherwise the talks and any agreement to be reached will not have any meaning," it said. The statement was issued Friday night ahead of fresh talks between Denktash and Cypriot President George Vassiliou starting in New York Monday. "Turkey is neither optimistic nor pessimistic on the forthcoming talks," Foreign Ministry spokesman Murat Sungur said. Turkey is the only country to recognise the breakaway Turkish Republic of North Cyprus," declared by Denktash in 1983. The island has been divided since a 1974 Turkish invasion which followed a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by the junta then ruling Greece.

Tunisia drafts students into army

TUNIS (R) — Tunisian authorities have drafted 283 militant students into the army in a bid to end weeks of campus unrest by Muslim fundamentalists. Those drafted were among over 580 students held for questioning this week after the Muslim militants occupied university buildings and fought police in Tunis and the southern town of Sfax, the Tunisian News Agency (TAP) said Friday. The authorities did however release Abdul Latif Makki, the secretary general of the Tunisian General Students' Union, the Islamic group behind the protests, TAP said.

Omani official leaves Tehran

NICOSIA (AP) — Oman's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Yousef Ibn Alawi, has left Tehran after two days of discussions on the deadlocked peace talks between Iran and Iraq. The official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), which reported the departure, said Alawi considered his visit "highly successful and fruitful." The Omani envoy, seen off at the airport by Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, said Tehran expressed readiness for strengthening its relations with the Gulf countries. IRNA, monitored in Nicosia, said Alawi's visit was part of an effort by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states to revive the Iran-Iraq negotiations. The talks are deadlocked because of differences between Iran and Iraq over the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, which halted the war with a ceasefire in August 1988. "We have always been for the full implementation of the U.N. resolution and accept any efforts in this regard," Velayati said, terming the talks with the Omani delegation as constructive regarding the issue of improving relations among the Gulf states. The GCC members selected Oman last month to mediate between Iraq and Iran.

Western-style democracy 'premature' for GCC

MANAMA (AP) — Bahrain's Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa Ibn Salman Al Khalifa was quoted Saturday as rejecting notions that changes in Eastern Europe would have an impact on the Arab states of the Gulf.

He also said it was premature to copy Western-style democracies in the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

"Our societies may need some standardised form in future when life problems become more complicated," said Sheikh Khalifa in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Seyassat distributed by the Gulf News Agency.

"When we feel that our people have reached a stage of social complication as a result of the forces of civilisation, then tradi-

tional forms (of democracy) would be inevitable," he said.

Sheikh Khalifa criticised pro-democracy activists in Kuwait and other GCC countries trying to emulate Europeans by pressing for change in their countries, that sharply altered the Communist world.

"They believed that the circumstances of Eastern Europe resembled the climate of the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula... that they can obtain results here similar to the consequences emerging in Eastern Europe. But our conditions and systems are different from those of Eastern Europe."

Proponents of Western-style democracy have been active mainly in Kuwait, seeking the restoration of the elected 50-member parliament dissolved in

1990.

The GCC groups Bahrain with Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, an alliance of the states that essentially came into their own only with the oil wealth of recent decades.

"Undoubtedly, what happened in Eastern Europe states has whetted the appetite of advocates of some currents, who in the past tried to promote political goods which implied an ideology dif-

ferent from that of our region," said Sheikh Khalifa.

His remarks were the most elaborate public comments by a GCC leader on the possible repercussions in the Gulf of events in 1990 for the same reasons.

Bahrain was the only other GCC country to have an elected parliament, but only for a brief two-year spell in the early 1970s shortly after the central Gulf island state gained independence from Britain.

The GCC states mostly emulate the Islamic system of rule through shura or consultative councils, whose members are appointed to help push through legislation. The leaders also have the weekly majlis, where citizens can call freely with their petitions.

Palestine names first women ambassadors

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — For the first time, Yasser Arafat has approved the appointment of women to head the Palestinian diplomatic missions, a senior PLO official said Saturday.

Abdul Latif Abu Hijlah, director-general of the PLO's Political Department, said Layla Shaheen was named Palestinian ambassador to Dublin and Nuha Tadros to Valetta, Malta, under a reshuffle of representatives approved by Arafat.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) launched its 1988 peace initiative acknowledging the existence of the state of Israel side by side with a Palestinian state on what was formerly Palestine under British mandate.

The PLO has already un-

ilaterally proclaimed the establishment of the state, generally designated for the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories which are under Israeli occupation.

Abu Hijlah, who spoke in Abu Dhabi, said the reshuffle involves 12 ambassadors among whom were some new appointees, including the two women.

Shaheen, who studied political sciences at the Sorbonne, was a close aide of the late Izzadeen Calaq, the PLO's representative in Paris in 1980 who was assassinated in the late 1970s.

Shaheen, in her early 40s, has been an active member of Fatah, the Palestinian mainstream faction within the PLO, since she was a student at the American University of Beirut.

Abu Hijlah said the other

changes involved the transfer of Fuad Bitar from Athens, Greece, to Bucharest, Romania, while Issam Kamil will be moved from East Berlin to Madrid.

Fuad Yassin moves from Spain to Turkey, while Rabi Haloun moves from Turkey to Indonesia and Al Tayib Abdul Rahman from Yugoslavia to Jordan.

Abdullah Abdulla in Canada shifts to Greece and Hassan Abdul Rahman replaces him. Abdul Rahman was considered representative in the United States even though Washington has rejected having Palestinian office.

He said the move became necessary in support of the peace initiative and to offset the political gains Israel was making in Eastern Europe after the dramatic government changes in countries that were traditional supporters of the Palestinians.

For Washington, according to Abu Hijlah, but he would not give the name of the new appointee.

Abu Hijlah said

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Mubarak
calls for
historic
conciliation
between
Palestinians,
Israelis

AMMAN (Petra) — Egyptian
President Hosni Mubarak Saturday
called for full Arab support for
Jordan in the face of Israeli
threats and in view of the
continued influx of Jewish immi-
grants into Palestine.

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Israeli influence in the U.S.

Addressing the opening session

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Israel."

The Iraqi leader, in his 50-
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future of Arab countries and
emphasised the need to establish
inter-Arab relations based on
non-interference in each other's
affairs and non-use of military
power in inter-Arab disputes.

Following are major excerpts
from the president's speech:

"We want to make it clear to
such elements to be aware of the
fact that there is a pan-Arab and
international commitment to pro-
tect Jordan's sovereignty and ter-
ritorial integrity and to ensure its
positive role in the peace process.

"The present developments in
our region should draw the
world's attention to the fact that
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the region is bound to lead to
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quences can not be predicted and
which can have damaging results on
the interests of all parties.

"Therefore, we urgently call for
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"As we meet in Amman this year
with this meeting in Amman, we
hope to pursue the march along
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deep confidence in the endeavours
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other leaders to motivate our
actions to continue the efforts
with more determination to
achieve further progress.

We hope that the steps taken in
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will make themselves felt by the
people in the four countries who
should benefit from these gains so
that their enthusiasm can be
enhanced and their confidence in
the ACC can increase.

We meet in Amman with great
national hopes, on top of which is
the hope that we can unite our
aspirations for the coming year.

We meet in Amman where we
can see the lights of holy Jeru-
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from close. We can see the lights of Jerusalem from Baghdad
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Palestine was usurped through
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freedom fighters of occupied
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for determination and readiness
to offer sacrifice to achieve that
sacred goal.

The loss of Palestine was not
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but because the Arabs have
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that the Arabs have achieved
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enemies in the eastern front (the
Arabian Gulf) and witnessed the
heroic stand of the Palestinian
people armed with stones, they
can and should recover Palestine
and should liberate the occupied
lands from injustice and occupa-
tion.

"The Arabs should end the
vicious circle and the tragic situ-
ation and devastation by doubling
efforts to reach a comprehensive
settlement in Lebanon.

"Although much has been
achieved in the first year of the
bloc's existence, the road is long
towards further integration."



The motorcade of the four leaders heads for Hashemite Palace after the conclusion of the summit (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Iraq assails U.S. presence in Gulf, support for Israel

By a Jordan Times
Staff Writer

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(Continued on page 5)

Senate urges ACC leaders to end Iraq-Syria differences

AMMAN (Petra) — The Upper
House of Parliament (Senate)

Saturday urged the leaders of the

four-member Arab Cooperation
Council (ACC) to speed up action

towards ending differences

between Iraq and Syria so that

the Arabs can together confront

the common dangers. The cable,

which was sent by Senate Speaker

Ahmad Al Lawzi, also urged the

four leaders to take "necessary

measures that can help find a

solution for the Lebanese prob-
lem and end the no-war-no-peace

situation in the Gulf."

Lawzi appealed to the ACC

leaders to undertake a clear and

speedy policy to deal with the

consequences of Soviet Jewish

immigration to Palestine. De-
scribing the immigration as the

most serious danger facing the

Arab Nation, the cable called for

a pan-Arab summit that should

be convened as soon as possible

to deal with the situation.

Lawzi pointed out that the

Soviet Union was about to issue a

new law on emigration and said:

"This makes it incumbent on the

Arabs to exert immediate efforts

with the Soviet government to

delay the enactment of such law."

"Soviet Jewish immigration is a

dangerous conspiracy perpe-
trated against the Arab Nation by

the United States, which is con-
tinuing to support Israel's aggres-
sion and expansionist designs in

the Arab World," Lawzi added.

He said Washington's continued

financing of the immigration pro-
cess was part of the United

States' on-going cooperation with

the Soviet Union, and part of

America's communistic economic

and military aid for Israel.

Lawzi described the Jewish im-
migration as "a threat that is

bound to place added obstacles in

their human rights.

Lawzi said that the Senate was

convinced that the United States was

"taking further steps to dis-

play its total bias towards the

Zionists, a step which is bound to

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tions and endanger Arab-American

interests."

Another cable was sent to the

ACC leaders by prominent public

figures in Zarqa Governorate

urging collective action in the

face of Jewish immigration to

Palestine. The cable called on the

Arabs to demand that the Soviet

Union stop the emigration of

Jews in a show of respect for the

Arabs' human rights of the Palesti-

nian people.

Respect for human rights of the

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Awesome tasks

MANY PRESSING Arab issues figured highly on the agenda of the Arab Cooperation Council's (ACC) summit which concluded in Amman last night. Prominent among these issues of course was Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, the Iraq-Iran conflict, Lebanon and the Arab water situation. Important and urgent as all these conflicts indeed are, there was no doubt that the shadow of changes in the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe hung closely over the discussions in the conference. It must be clear to the Arab World by now that what goes on between the East and West, especially between Moscow and Washington, would have a direct bearing on all these dangers, for none of them could be debated any longer in isolation from the rapid transformations occurring in the international arena. The leaders of the ACC countries talked about these changes in their speeches at some length and doubtless conducted their deliberations with the emerging new world order very much in mind. There simply was no way to come up with an action plan to stop the Soviet Jewish immigration into Palestine without first understanding and addressing the issue in the context of the breathtaking metamorphosis occurring between East and West. In any case this hard fact need not have prevented the summit from also addressing its agenda on the basis of self-reliance. There is a limit to what even successful diplomacy can accomplish in such national pursuits, as, in the final analysis, any gathering of Arab heads of state must exercise a certain degree of self-reliance in forging common strategies to face these dangers. His Majesty the King and President Saddam Hussein did in fact stress this point in their speeches, and we are confident that the summit as a whole did reach the conclusion that the issue of Jewish immigration could never be isolated from the broader subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially its Palestinian dimension. That is where support for the Palestinian intifada must draw its utmost strength for without consolidating the Palestinians' presence on their territories there is no effective way to neutralise Israel's determined efforts to populate Arab territories with Jewish immigrants. This time around, therefore, the ACC summit convened when the entire Arab World has been at new crossroads.

The burdens that the Arab leaders carry on their shoulders today are indeed heavy and awesome. And as we opened our arms for the ACC leaders and their summit we wish to assure them that our hearts and minds have been with them. What they have agreed upon is surely destined to have a positive impact, both regionally and internationally. We still hope for more though. There is a long way to go before Arab unity and integration become the order of the day.

JORDAN PRESS EDITORIALS

ALL JORDANIAN papers Saturday gave prominent coverage of a visit to Jordan by the heads of state of Iraq, Egypt and North Yemen which together with Jordan form the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC).

Al Ra'i daily said that the meeting of the three leaders with King Hussein in Amman reflects their commitment to national causes. But the paper said one should frankly address the ACC leaders and say that although the ACC formed one little step towards pan-Arab unity, the four countries ought to take practical measures to deal with the issues at hand. The paper said that the Arab masses who wish to have unity could be satisfied at the moment with serious work coming from united countries in purpose and aim, to deal with the pressing challenges at all levels. One should expect the four Arab countries to form a very strong deterrent for the Israeli, and to serve as a means to put an end to Israel's expansionist designs and aims in the Arab World, the paper added. The Arab Nation wants its leaders to confront and to foil all Israel's conspiracies and all forms of aggression which are now represented in the influx of Jewish immigrants settling on Arab land in Palestine, the paper said. The paper welcomed the Arab leaders in Amman and expressed hope that their meetings would yield very fruitful results in serving their nation.

The ACC summit meeting in Amman is being held under circumstances quite different from those that prevailed in the Arab World last February when the blow was proclaimed in Bagdad, says a guest columnist in Al Ra'i's Arabic daily Saturday. Mohammed Kharroub notes that the four countries, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and North Yemen have a lot of issues to settle and outstanding problems to be solved. For one, he says, the situation in the Gulf is not yet stable due to the absence of permanent peace between Iraq and Iran. Another challenge is the influx of Jews into Palestine, which is considered a real threat to the whole Arab Nation and which requires serious planning on the part of the Arab Nation and particular attention on the part of the ACC leaders meeting in Amman, the writer notes. He says that all four ACC members particularly Egypt and Jordan are burdened with foreign debts and are struggling to restructure their national economies, an endeavour which should attract the support and assistance of the rest of the Arab Nation. The writer points out that such questions together with enhancing the stand of the PLO and supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people should acquire the whole attention of the four leaders at their summit in Amman. The writer warns that the current challenges should give the four countries a good incentive to unite and take a collective action that would safeguard Arab national interests.

Sewt Al Shaab Arabic daily on Saturday also dwelt on the ACC summit describing it as a historic event taking place on the land of steadfastness. The paper said that the meeting serves as a touchstone for the Arab Nation's will and a means to determine whether the Arab Nation will survive or not. The paper said that the Arab people in this country can feel and see the serious dangers that loom in the offing, represented in the continued influx of Jews into occupied Palestine, and can see the danger represented in the impotence of the Arab Nation to deal with this dangerous situation.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Senate's report — positive and negative

THE report by the Upper House of Parliament's Finance Committee on 1990 budget sounded like a lecture, summarising the economic developments in Jordan, that led to the economic crisis in 1988. It singled out one indicator of the crisis, namely the depletion of the Central Bank reserves, which shocked the confidence and gave rise to speculation against the Jordanian dinar, which in turn led to the devaluation of the dinar and the resulting inflation that hit the standards of living of the people.

The report dealt with the economic correction programme, and put the government on record admitting that it is in full support of the programme without the Finance Committee saying whether it is criticising the government for its adherence to the programme or approving of its position. Silence can of course be understood to imply approval, but it certainly lacks the courage and clarity.

The Finance Committee of the Upper House pointed out the fact that the IMF concentrates on fiscal and monetary matters, but does not take into account the suffering of the people, the reduction in the standard of living, external security of the country, the obligations towards the Arab Cooperation Council, the immigration of the Soviet Jews to Palestine and the like. Such crucial matters, the report asserted, did not receive the attention of the IMF that they deserve.

It is true that the IMF does not worry about such matters, simply because it has no right to interfere. Nor should we allow the IMF to interfere in such matters even if it wanted to. The economic correction programme is by no means a replacement to the Jordanian national will and independent decision-making.

Even in the fiscal and monetary matters that the IMF cares about, it has no right to make decisions on behalf of the government. What the IMF cares about is that Jordan has set economic, fiscal and monetary targets, and that those targets are acceptable and can be quantified and followed up on. The manner

by which those targets could be achieved is left to the Jordanian government. If the target was to reduce the deficit in the budget by three per cent in a given year, the government is free to achieve this commitment through increasing revenue or decreasing expenditure or both. If the government chose to reduce expenditure, the IMF has no business in pointing out one or another item for reduction.

The report of the Finance Committee came up with 20 recommendations. It is doubtful whether the Upper House has the right to make decisions that were not looked at and resolved first by the Lower House. However, these recommendations came as an accumulation of ideas with no general theme.

Part of the recommendations dealt with matters already underway such as reduction of non-Jordanian workers, the postponement of large scale and unproductive projects, the issuance of new foreign exchange instructions, the clearing up of the banking system, and the curbing of bank credit facilities.

Another part of the recommendations dealt with matters that should be taken for granted, such as making the national financial assistance more selective, encouraging citizens to get involved in agricultural production, the support of the integrity of the justice system, the rationalisation of capital expenditure and the collection of the Treasury dues.

A third set of recommendations included general ideas that need further study to establish their feasibility, such as the distribution of subsidised commodities through cards, the pricing of public sector services at cost, the prevention of construction from eating up into arable land, the sale of government shares in companies, and the repatriation of 50 per cent of agricultural exports through the banking system.

The fourth part of the recommendations is extremely controversial. Two of them are worth some examination, namely the

balanced budget and the fixed interest rates instead of floating.

The balanced budget principle, which the committee called for, means the neutralisation of fiscal policy in influencing the level of economic activity. Traditional and conservative economists believed in a balanced or even surplus budget. However, after Keynes, it is almost universally agreed that the budget should be used as an effective instrument in stabilising the economy and fine-tuning the fluctuations through increasing or decreasing deficit or surplus in the budget as the situation may justify. It is not important to argue about the advantages or disadvantages of a balanced budget when such an eventuality is far away. The deficit in our budget is currently running at around 25 per cent. Ahead of us are several years of austerity before reducing the deficit to nine per cent. We definitely can put off such recommendation until the next century when it may become relevant.

The second recommendation, which is to return to fixed ceilings and floors of interest rates, was based on the fact that the Central Bank finally unified the two exchange rates in one. Actually floating of interest rate has nothing to do with double or single exchange rate, nor is it meant to cover the gap between the two rates. Rather, it is meant to encourage savings, reduce consumption of durable goods, secure flexibility, allow market forces to prevent capital flight and convince businessmen to repatriate their capital abroad to finance their needs instead of borrowing dinars locally, improve resources allocation, and enable the activities of higher productivity and risk to obtain credit which was channelled under fixed rates of interest to finance public sector and real estate investments due to low risk. Fixing interest rates on loans irrespective of the degree of risk and on deposits irrespective of size and duration is simply unreasonable and should not be attempted again.

respect of factual problems?

A: The independent commissions must not be overruled, but I will not contradict the tenor of your question. By the end of this year, if not earlier, we will be submitting a joint action programme for the 1990s.

Q: Population growth is one of the key problems. Can you envisage the two commissions, your own on development and the Brundtland Commission on environmental affairs and security are international in alignment. Do we not need comparable bodies at the national decision-making level?

A: We have made a modest start with the Development and Peace Foundation, set up jointly with Professor Biedenkopf and Herr von Weizsaecker, but it is too feeble a starting point for what you have in mind.

Q: Might it make sense for the federal president to appoint a national commission and to consider your report?

A: That certainly deserves to be considered seriously.

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Q: Population growth is one of the key problems. Can you envisage the two commissions, your own on development and the Brundtland Commission on environmental affairs, discussing it with the world religions?

A: They ought to do so in view of the importance of the problem, which simply cannot be overestimated. Plain speaking with the churches is important.

Q: It is not very helpful when strict tendencies in more than one

church equate family planning and abortion. We have shirked the issue for far too long.

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Brandt: Third World can strengthen hand in new era

With change sweeping the East and hardship the South, is the time ripe for perestroika on an international scale? Klaus Lefringhausen of Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt here interviews Willy Brandt. The interview is excerpted to highlight the views of the SPD's honorary president on how trends in the East Bloc are likely to affect the southern hemisphere. Herr Brandt is also chairman of the international commission on North-South relations that bears his name.

Question: What will perestroika in the East mean for the South?

Answer: The Dutch Nobel laureate Jan Tinbergen recently wrote to me wondering whether the time was ripe for perestroika on an international scale, encompassing both East and West.

The climate is certainly favourable for asking this question. Few would now dismiss as mere wishful thinking the idea of cutting arms expenditure and ploughing

part of the proceeds into the developing countries.

In principle the Soviet Union is no exception, although it will initially need to spend the lion's share of funds saved to solve domestic problems.

At the same time environmental issues have fostered a widespread appreciation that North and South share common interests, making it easier to discuss our interest in waging war on world famine.

The developing countries could strengthen their negotiating position if they were to switch more

to the principle of regional representation at the conference table. Serious negotiations are virtually impossible to conduct at a gathering of 150 countries.

These and other institutional issues will preoccupy us even more intensively in the years ahead.

Past East-West rivalry has weakened the position of the UN secretary-general. That will hope fully change for the better.

Q: The UN's work is largely decided by the negotiating tactics of member-governments and by the domestic political situation in member-countries.

Might the three UN commissions on development, the environment and disarmament in future don the advocate's robes in

Ortega: Underneath new image, old fires simmer

By Candice Hughes
The Associated Press

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — On the campaign trail, President Daniel Ortega comes across like a combination of rock star, game show host and evangelical politician.

It is a dramatic change in image for a man so serious, so earnest about his country, his revolution, his job that even close friends say he can be boring.

But behind the slick new facade still simmer the old class resentments, the anger and the hunger that carried Ortega to the pinnacle of Nicaraguan power.

Ortega the candidate has swapped his trademark olive-drab uniform for flashy sports shirts, and exchanged his owlish glasses for contact lenses.

He dances at campaign rallies with beauty queens and tosses baseballs. He kisses babies and poses with them for polaroid pictures. He shakes hands and dispenses on-the-spot patronage with a boldness that could shame even a seasoned politician.

His new style reflects, in part, a man more confident of his own hold on power and more comfortable with crowds than the scruffy, strident young revolutionary who marched in Managua more than a decade ago.

But it also is the product of slick celebrity packaging.

The Sandinista campaign sells Ortega the way New York City advertising firms pitch the latest youth-oriented commodity, emphasising the contrast with his main challenger, the white-haired, 60-year-old publisher Violeta Barrios de Chamorro.

Ortega grew up steeped in anti-U.S. resentments forged by the nearly continuous marine occupation of Nicaragua between 1921 and 1933 and by the U.S. role in installing the Somoza family dictatorship. Both of his parents served time in jail for anti-Somoza activities.

In an interview last year with the Associated Press, Ortega said his greatest achievement in a decade of power was fending off U.S. attempts to topple the Sandinista revolution.

The cost of the war with U.S.-backed rebels, known as contras, and the economic embargo, he said, had been immense. But "the reality is that the revolution is here," he said.

Ortega became a Sandinista when he was 18, leaving law school to join the tiny, clandestine Marxist movement in 1963.

By 1966, he had completed six months of guerrilla training in Cuba and was masterminding bank robberies to raise money for the cause.

By 1967, he was in prison for killing a national guard officer, lamenting in a now-famous poem that he never got to see Managua when mini-skirts were in style.

The image is one thing, the words another.

Ortega's rhetoric is harsh. His campaign speeches hammer on the Sandinista's main challenger, the United National Opposition coalition, like a power drill.

UNO, Ortega insists, is one

and the same as the hated and feared national guard that defended Anastasio Somoza's dictatorship until it fell in the 1979 revolution that swept the Sandinistas to power.

Ortega came home from Cuba in 1975 and when Somoza fell in 1979, he became head of the ruling junta that took over. He became president in 1984 elections. His dominant position in the Sandinista leadership is stored up by his brother Humberto, who serves as defence minister.

Its leaders, he says, represent the affluent class that put up with the Somoza family dictatorship for 45 years, lining their pockets

with Ortega on the original ruling junta, but resigned after nine months. Later, she said the Sandinistas had betrayed their promise of a pluralistic, democratic Nicaragua.

Those old promises haunt Nicaragua. Should Ortega lose Sunday's election, his word will be put to the test anew.

Daniel Ortega could become a real historical figure if he were to peacefully hand over power to Dona Violeta; he could go down in the history of Latin American revolutionary movements, said Alfredo Cesar, Mrs. Chamorro's chief strategist.

We have lots of guys in Latin America who refuse to hand over power. If he didn't he'd be just one more little dictator. But he has chance to make history.

Ortega shows no sign he plans to confront defeat.

The people have already voted," he tells his audiences confidently. "I speak to you as the president-elect."

An elegant woman with graceful manners, the 60-year-old

widow's two main strengths are her martyred husband and her lack of alignment with any one political party.

That was enough to qualify her as the presidential candidate for the disparate and fractious United National Opposition. Now, as a silver-haired grandmother, she finds herself the political symbol at the centre of an electoral storm.

Despite a rocky start, a broken knee and sometimes breathtaking political na

Features

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ACC moves on to building stage; Jordan will defend Arab Nation

The following is the full text of the address made by His Majesty King Hussein at the opening session of the ACC Summit, Saturday, Feb. 24, 1990.

His Excellency, our brother Ali Abdallah Saleh,
His Excellency, our brother Saddam Hussein,
His Excellency, our brother Mohammed Husein,

I greet you in the true Arab spirit and welcome you most sincerely to Jordan, your Arab home that is firm in its loyalty and faithful in its commitment to the Arab Nation and people.

It is our good fortune and a source of hope and optimism that this summit should coincide with the holy anniversary of Isra' and Mi'raj. You have come to Amman, within sight of the precious captive city of Jerusalem, where all hearts have been joined in faith and all souls united in love and harmony since the pact of Omar established the noble basis of this union. Since that pact, we presented to the world a model of a nation devoted to the one God, purified by its worship of him, Muslims and Christians, in their mosques and churches were enjoined by a national bond that will always be their source of strength and security as they face their challenges and build their future. You are with us in Amman today, within view of the first of the two qiblas and the third of the holy harams, as well as the churches of Nativity and Holy Sepulchre, where the name of God touches the heart before it echoes in the ear; and where the courageous Palestinian national uprising, the intifada, sees a source of its strength and steadfastness in ours, which we seek to build in order to regain our right and protect our dignity. This summit also coincides with another cherished occasion, the first anniversary of founding the Arab Cooperation Council. In these precious moments, I find it difficult to express to you what lies in our hearts and minds. I find it uneasy to welcome you when you are in your own home, among your own family, as we were earlier among our brothers in Egypt and Iraq, and in Yemen, whose steps towards unity we have followed with happiness and optimism. It is our common belief that every step towards unity brings us closer to fulfilling our dream, and renews our hope to do so. Therefore, I consider it my happy duty to bless the efforts of our Yemeni brothers and to wish them all success in their undertaking, which is as much our ambition as it is that of the one people of Yemen.

Brother Presidents, The establishment of the Arab Cooperation Council last February was the product of a common awareness, developed and intensified by our concern for the present and future of our peoples, which are part of the present and future of the Arab Nation. In the first year we reached a series of agreements that define the framework of our common action. Now, as we enter the second year, we are hopeful and determined to translate these achievements into a reality that brings many benefits to our peoples, and confirms by practice the seriousness that guided our first steps.

Therefore, I am confident that, having laid the foundation, we are now able to proceed to the building stage, in all fields of cooperation and complementarity.

The events that are now taking place in the world, the end of the cold war, and the development of new and surprising realities, impose on us a vital responsibility to our countries and future generations. There are those who want our region, our nation, and our people to be on the periphery of the movement of history. It is our responsibility to intensify and vitalise our work within the council, to make it clear to others that we can be neither broken nor disregarded; that our causes, concerns and ambitions cannot be ignored; and that we are not to be treated with condescension. You are aware that the end of the cold war may make our countries and peoples part of an accord between economic groupings that already exist, or others that are still forming. Unless the great work we have started substantiates our active and effective presence, grave dangers will come our way, threatening the very existence of our nation. The Arab Nation now faces two options:

One, to be part of these historic developments and employ them to enhance its existence, stability, and growth, or, two, to be on the periphery of these developments, and so become an easy prey that is mercilessly looted and discarded without having gained any benefit from these developments for the Arab land and people. A new world order is emerging, whose most prominent features are the emphasis on economic and political groupings, and the new relationships between countries of the North, based on stability and progress instead of hegemony and the arms race.

Consequently, this summit which we hold today is our first opportunity to affirm our deep understanding of world events. This understanding should be translated into action that earns the respect of others and reflects our self-respect and concern for our existence and future. If we do not define our role in the world it will be defined for us by others. This is the task which our council will carry out.

Today we stand together on Jordanian soil, in this Arab realm, with hearts united by affection, minds sharpened by awareness, and strong arms that have undertaken joint Arab action for the better of our peoples and our Arab Nation. In the first year since the establishment of the ACC, we laid the groundwork for cooperation and complementarity. I thank God for guiding us to this approach and helping us to start building our council with care and awareness.

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We now start our second year with optimism and eagerness, but also with serenity and resolve to achieve our goals. The road before us is clearly marked, our objectives are well defined, and we shall achieve them through our determination and diligence, by the help of God, and with his guidance.

At this point, I should register our deep appreciation for the Republic of Iraq for hosting our founding summit, for our brother Saddam Hussein for chairing the first session of the higher commission, and for our brother Taha Yassin Ramadan for heading the ministerial committee and the ministerial commission.

In Lebanon, strife persists despite the good offices and efforts of the Arab tripartite higher committee to help Lebanon regain its unity and sovereignty over all Lebanese soil. This leaves the situation in Lebanon explosive and jeopardises, not only the existence of Lebanon, but also the whole Arab order.

And then came the waves of Jewish immigrants to add a new and most dangerous dimension that puts us all against an organised act of aggression that targets all Palestinian soil, and carries the seeds of a new expansionist aggression threatening this part of the Arab World. I warned of this danger before it had materialised, and I repeat my warning now that it has begun to do so. It does not threaten my country alone, but also the depth of the Arab Nation. It jeopardises Arab security and constitutes an obstacle to peace, as well as a new blow against the intifada and the legitimate Palestinian people's struggle to gain their liberty and independence on their national soil.

I pause here to refer to Israel's clamour, attempting to embed in people's minds its opposition to any non-Jordanian military presence on the Arab soil of Jordan, the longest line of confrontation with Israel, and the Arab Nation's tenacious forward position against aggression and expansionism.

What is worth contemplating is the intensification of the Israeli campaign against Jordan at a time when we suffer a reduction in our capabilities and resources, and face tremendous difficulties in securing the minimum that allows us to defend ourselves and the integrity of the Arab Nation. All this, while Israel receives unlimited support and assistance

from many in the world, particularly, aid on a regular and growing basis from the most powerful nation, without any effort, decline, or interruption.

Everyone without exception realises the negative effects of the drop in our resources, and its direct consequences on our steadfast people in the occupied territories because of the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar.

In Lebanon, strife persists despite the good offices and efforts of the Arab tripartite higher committee to help Lebanon regain its unity and sovereignty over all Lebanese soil. This leaves the situation in Lebanon explosive and jeopardises, not only the existence of Lebanon, but also the whole Arab order.

Nevertheless, we shall remain as our nation has always known us, forbearing, resolute, and steadfast in its vanguard, ready to defend our country and the Arab Nation. Suffice it for this country to have the honour of defending our Arab Nation and contain the first blow of aggression when it comes, to the best of our ability.

I should not forget to express, at this point, our gratitude and appreciation to our brothers who, prompted by their sense of nationalism, stood by us, and helped us overcome part of our financial and economic difficulties.

These issues are too important for us not to keep pace with them and formulate a united national stand towards them. The prime task of our council is to build, but consolidating and protecting what we build are part of the Arab effort to face the dangers represented by each one of these causes.

The evolving situation in the world requires a serious Arab stand. I am confident that you share my hope that our summit will prove part of the greater effort, which requires a different type of examination and preparation, both in intensity and comprehensiveness, so we can arrive at a united and effective national stand that makes our nation capable of dealing with the new developments and able to face its challenges.

Brother Presidents,

Permit me, once again, to welcome you to your country, among your people, hoping that our summit will be successful in realising our hopes and those of our peoples.

May God's peace and blessings be with you.

The return to peace and good neighbourliness to this part of our region would leave no excuse or pretext for foreign armed pre-

summit also coincides with another cherished occasion, the first anniversary of founding the Arab Cooperation Council. In these precious moments, I find it difficult to express to you what lies in our hearts and minds. I find it uneasy to welcome you when you are in your own home, among your own family, as we were earlier among our brothers in Egypt and Iraq, and in Yemen, whose steps towards unity we have followed with happiness and optimism. It is our common belief that every step towards unity brings us closer to fulfilling our dream, and renews our hope to do so. Therefore, I consider it my happy duty to bless the efforts of our Yemeni brothers and to wish them all success in their undertaking, which is as much our ambition as it is that of the one people of Yemen.

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Genscher: Uncertainty over Polish border issue hindering unification

WEST BERLIN (AP) — West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher says uncertainty over Bonn's stance regarding Poland's Western border is hindering German unification, and has called for Germany to reject any claims to Polish territory.

Poland's state news agency (PAP) said that Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki called Kohl Friday evening.

The prime minister presented to the chancellor Poland's position on the problem connected with the process of unification of Germany and security of their neighbours," PAP said.

Mazowiecki stepped up the pressure on the border issue this week by calling on the two Germans to sign a peace treaty guaranteeing Poland's post-World War II boundaries.

Kohl's spokesman says that only the government of a United Germany can reject claims to what is now Poland, leading to an apparent difference of opinion with the Foreign Ministry.

German conservatives still claim part of modern-day Poland. About one-third of modern-day Poland was part of the Third Reich, and was turned over to Poland after the Nazi defeat.

Many agree with Genscher in arguing that questions about Bonn's stance regarding Polish

territory stand in the way of joining the two German states.

The West German government is already positioning itself for the expected merging, although some say Kohl has been trying to move too quickly.

Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble told U.S. officials that the East Germany's freely elected parliament may opt for immediate unification, after being sworn in following elections on March 18.

"It is conceivable that there will be no more (East German) government after March 18," the conservative Bonn daily newspaper *Die Welt* quoted him as telling officials in Washington. He said it was due to the expected splintering of the new parliament.

Several recent polls, however, have indicated East Germany's Social Democrats will win more than 50 per cent of the vote.

East Germany's economic crisis has accelerated in recent weeks, forcing the government to end food subsidies and raising fears that the nation is on the

verge of economic collapse.

One of the most critical decisions affecting the pace and manner of unification will be the rate at which the East German mark is made convertible for the powerful West German currency in a monetary union joining the currencies.

A 1-to-1 conversion rate would likely lead to rampant inflation, economists say.

Bonn government spokesman Dieter Vogel Friday discounted a newspaper report contending that the West German government had decided on the 1-to-1 rate.

Vogel said that the committee studying economic union is still in the "fact-finding stage" and has come up with no firm conclusions.

Genscher, the influential foreign minister of the centrist Free Democrats, has called for a clear stance regarding the Polish border.

"Uncertainty or a lack of obligation in this question hinders the unification of Germany," Genscher said in an interview with the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung.

He said both countries should issue declarations rejecting claims to Polish territory after East Germany's elections on March 18. "They could each do that separately and then later for all of

Germany," Genscher said, looking forward to the expected unification.

Thatcher: Unification moves in right direction

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Friday that moves by Europe to adjust to German unification were "going in the right direction."

"We are at the stage where we know what questions to ask," said Thatcher, speaking at a news conference with Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, who was making a one-day visit to London.

Thatcher was referring to an agreement this month for the four World War II allied powers and the two Germans to agree on the external arrangements for unification, and for it to be considered jointly at a 35-nation East-West summit later this year.

Andreotti said he agreed with Thatcher's approach of seeking to keep the issue "within the framework of problems confronting NATO and the Helsinki Conference (the 35-nation conference on security and cooperation in Europe.)"

Thatcher also announced that President Francesco Cossiga of Italy will make a state visit to Britain in October as the guest of Queen Elizabeth II.

Nowhere is the cost of the proposals spelled out, though states are asked to consider the possibility of "using forfeited property and proceeds for activities to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking."

But at the moment there are only \$4 million allocated in annual U.N. budget, plus another \$65-70 million a year in voluntary contributions for the U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UN-FDAC), which does field work.

"Like most of you I was struck by the limited resources provided for U.N. agencies involved in these matters," Assembly President Joseph Garba said.

Margaret Anstee, the British under-secretary general in charge of all U.N. drug activities, told a news conference the world body did not have enough funds to fulfil its current mandates on drug projects.

Forthcoming discussions in U.N. financial bodies "will be extremely important and for my money an indication of whether we really are being serious about this fight and the pivotal role of the United Nations," she said.

BAKEL, Senegal (R) — Britain's Princess Anne, braving a sandstorm and stifling heat, briefly shared the plight of refugees in camps in northern Senegal bordering Mauritania. The princess listened to the stories of some of the 50,000 Mauritanians who fled or were driven out of their country last year following ethnic riots in both West African nations. Senegal and mostly-Arab Mauritania severed diplomatic links in August after a border dispute stirred communal violence and a mass exodus of refugees across the River Senegal which forms their border. The 39-year-old princess is visiting West Africa as president of the London-based charity Save the Children Fund.

Bulgaria to abolish party organisations at workplace

SOFIA, Bulgaria (AP) — The Communist Party leadership has agreed to abolish party organisations in the workplace, a key demand of the democratic opposition, informed sources said Saturday.

At a closed-door meeting late Friday, the supreme council of the party proposed that the measure should be included in a new law on parties, sources in Sofia said.

The law is expected to be adopted at a session of the National Assembly, which begins on March 5, the sources said.

Talks between the Communists and the opposition, including the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and other political and social groups, were suspended on Feb. 12 because of a controversy over the party cells and other political demands.

The Communists' agreement in principle to give up their organisation in factories, enterprises and administrative units was welcomed by opposition representatives as a positive step.

"It is a good sign because the Communist Party understands that they must do something" to show their commitment to democratisation, said Alexander Karakachanov, a UDF member and president of the Bulgaria Greens

Mandela faces leadership test over Natal violence

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela faces the biggest test of his leadership since release from life imprisonment when he tries Sunday to end a bloody inter-Black feud in south Africa's Natal province.

Mandela, figurehead of the African National Congress (ANC), will also attempt to forge unity among anti-apartheid groups ahead of negotiations with the white minority government on a post-apartheid South Africa.

"Mandela's reputation for statesmanship and non-sectarian breadth of vision will be test to the full tomorrow," commented the Star, the country's largest daily newspaper.

Mandela's speech at a rally in the Natal port city of Durban will be his second major address since being freed 13 days ago. It will deal with an 11-year-old rift between the two largest groups representing voteless blacks — the ANC and the Zulu Inkatha Movement.

"The most challenging task facing the leadership today is that of unity," Mandela said in a recent letter to Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

"I consider it a serious indictment against all of us that we are still unable to combine forces to stop the slaughter of so many innocent lives."

Buthelezi says he and Mandela have remained friends despite the rift and welcomes his trip to Natal, home of the country's six

watchers had been arrested separately but they had no details on why or when.

Godoy last week called on supporters to go to polling stations after they closed Sunday to prevent any attempt to tamper with election results.

But Godoy said Friday the opposition could adopt civil disobedience if there was election fraud. "We can revive the procedures of Mahatma Gandhi," he said.

Both Richardson and Nicaraguan political leaders said they were worried about possible violence on election day.

"The principal concern that we... have had in the closing days is that there might be some disruption of the electoral process whether as a result of overzealousness... or conceivably for purposes of exploiting the situation in some manner," Richardson said.

"They will be able freely to determine their future government through the verdict of the ballot boxes on Feb. 25," he told a news conference.

Some 2,500 international observers will watch over Sunday's polls, a bitter battle between the leftist Sandinistas led by President Daniel Ortega and the U.S.-backed National Opposition Union (UNO), whose presidential candidate is Violetta Chamorro. Both sides say they are confident of victory.

Polls indicate the Sandinistas are ahead, but Washington held fast Friday to its position of mistrust toward them.

"We remain sceptical regarding the Sandinistas because of their repeated failure to keep commitments they have made to

the Organisation of American States (OAS) and to the other Central American governments," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said in a statement.

The UNO has said it fears fraud in the polls and the verdict of the observers will be crucial in deciding whether the winners are internationally accepted. It will be the most closely-scrutinised election ever held in Latin America.

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Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arrived in Nicaragua at the head of another observer mission Friday and said he would work to ensure the results reflected the people's will.

UNO vice-presidential candidate Virginia Godoy said the detention of the poll-watchers could leave 22 polling stations in Managua without opposition monitoring on election day.

Each party has the right to name a poll-watcher to each polling centre and international observers have said this is crucial to ensure the vote is fair.

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watchers had been arrested separately but they had no details on why or when.

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Ortega said in an interview his leftist Sandinista government would refuse to run guns to rebels in El Salvador if it was re-elected Sunday.

Ortega told the New York Times he agreed to adhere to various pacts prohibiting the flow of illegal arms across Central America borders. He said his government accepted the need for strict mechanisms to prevent arms shipments to guerrilla groups.

"It is not enough to trust a government's words alone," Ortega said when asked why his promises should be believed. "You have to rely on controls," he said.

Sandinistas leaders have admitted that Nicaragua sent arms to Salvadorean rebels in 1980 and 1981. But they have denied since then any role in sending weapons or supplies to the Salvadorean guerrillas.

Meanwhile, voters in Lithuania went to the polls Saturday to elect a local parliament expected to lead the once-independent republic back to statehood.

The Soviet News Agency (TASS) said voters were choosing from among 473 candidates for 141 seats in the republic's parliament.

U.N. adopts global drug programme

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — About 200 student protesters demanding government reform ended a sit-in at the capital's Roman Catholic cathedral early Saturday, but were later detained and beaten by police. After the students came out of St. Paul's Cathedral, where they had been holed up for 10 hours, they were herded into police trucks and taken to the city's main police station. As the students emerged from the trucks, police could be seen beating them with truncheons. The students' cries filled the air. The students had begun their occupation of the cathedral Friday afternoon at about 3 p.m. (1500 GMT), the latest in a weekly series of demonstrations against President Felix Houphouet-Boigny's conservative government.

After a four-day special session attended by some 50 cabinet-rank ministers, the U.N. General Assembly Friday adopted an ambitious plan designed to tackle every phase of the \$300 billion international drug trade.

"We resolve to protect mankind from the scourge of drug abuse and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances," the six-page declaration says.

The plan's recommendations to governments and international bodies cover all aspects of the drug trade: cultivation of the coca and poppy fields that provide the raw material for cocaine and heroin, processing, trafficking, demand, money laundering and the rehabilitation of addicts.

The United Nations is envisioned as having a central coordinating role in distributing information, drawing up technical and legal plans and conducting field projects in developing nations.

Nowhere is the cost of the proposals spelled out, though states are asked to consider the possibility of "using forfeited property and proceeds for activities to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking."

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WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Students beaten, arrested in Ivory Coast

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Boat people attack screening process

HONG KONG (R) — A group of Vietnamese boat people who face deportation from Hong Kong mounted a high court battle Saturday which could delay or even halt the policy of forcible repatriation. Nguyen Ho, 30, launched the attack by challenging Hong Kong's screening process that bestows refugee status on a few and declares the majority to be illegal immigrants, his solicitor Robin Bridge said. Those screened out as illegal immigrants are kept in detention centres until the British Colony sends them back to Vietnam, against their will if necessary.

11 U.S. soldiers dead in 2 crashes

PANAMA CITY (R) — Eleven U.S. soldiers were killed in two U.S. army helicopter crashes in bad weather earlier this week, the U.S. Southern Command has said. Searches found the second of the two helicopters Friday and all nine men on board the UH-1H Huey were dead, the Southern Command said. The first, an OH-58 observation helicopter, was found Thursday with both men aboard killed. "We don't have any indication it was anything other than the weather," a Southern Command spokesman said. The aircraft encountered thunderstorms while on a training mission Wednesday near Punta Diego, 80 kilometres southwest of the Atlantic Port of Colon.

Smoking ban begins on U.S. flights

WASHINGTON (R) — Smoking will be banned on virtually all U.S. domestic airline flights beginning Sunday when a law passed by Congress last year goes into effect. The law bars smoking on all flights of under six hours within the United States, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Smoking will be allowed only on flights between Hawaii or Alaska and the other 48 states that are six hours or longer — about two dozen out of nearly 18,000 daily domestic flights. Some of these flights will also be made non-smoking runs by the airlines that fly them. The law does not apply to international routes but many U.S. airlines are voluntarily extending the smoking ban on flights between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the Caribbean.

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Anne tours Senegal refugee camps

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Column 8

Charles chuckles over charge of 'architect-bashing'

WASHINGTON (R) — Britain's Prince Charles joked about his reputation as an "architect-basher" at an architecture gala, but got serious when it came to defending his plea for more traditional buildings. "I read in the newspapers... that architects were queuing up to be bashed by the prince — apparently architect-bashing is my second favourite sport to polo," he told 1,200 guests at the American Institute of Architects awards ceremony in Washington. An uninvited but highly vocal critic of post-war architecture, the Prince of Wales renewed his call for a return to tradition. "I understand all the arguments about being contemporary and about the need to reflect the spirit of the age, but what alarms me is that the age has no spirit," he said. Architects and others had clamoured to attend the Washington gala. Tickets sold out a month ago and 800 people were on a waiting list for the \$250-a-plate dinner in the newly restored National Building Museum.

Global weather